

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 ACDA-12 HA-05 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05
H-01 INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 SP-02
SS-15 ICA-11 AID-05 CEA-01 COME-00 EB-08 FRB-03
STR-07 LAB-04 SIL-01 OMB-01 /113 W
-----087786 122316Z /70

R 122103Z MAY 78
FM AMEMBASSY BONN
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8537
INFO AMEMBASSY BERLIN
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
AMEMBASSY PARIS
AMEMBASSY ROME
AMCONSUL BREMEN
AMCONSUL DUSSELDORF
AMCONSUL FRANKFURT
AMCONSUL HAMBURG
AMCONSUL MUNICH
AMCONSUL STUTTGART
USMISSION USBERLIN

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BONN 08904

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PEPR, PINT, UR, GW
SUBJECT: BREZHNEV VISIT: DISCUSSIONS WITH THE OPPOSITION

REFERENCE: BONN 8752

BEGIN SUMMARY: BREZHNEV MET MAY 6 FOR 45 MINUTES EACH
WITH THE FRG'S TWO LEADING OPPOSITION FIGURES, HELMUT
KOHL (CHAIRMAN OF THE CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATIC UNION AND
OVERALL OPPOSITION LEADER) AND FRANZ-JOSEF STRAUSS
(CHAIRMAN OF THE BAVARIAN CHRISTIAN SOCIALIST UNION).
THE NET EFFECT OF BOTH DISCUSSIONS WAS TO CONVEY THE
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IMPRESSION THAT THE USSR AND THE OPPOSITION ARE
CAPABLE OF TALKING AND DOING BUSINESS TOGETHER, AN
IMPRESSION ALSO CONVEYED TO US SUBSEQUENTLY BY A SOVIET
DIPLOMAT. IN ADDITION, THE MEETINGS GOT AN INTERESTING
PRESS PLAY LOCALLY TO THE EFFECT THAT THE BREZHNEV-
STRAUSS MEETING PASSED WITHOUT FRICTION AND WITH GOOD
RAPPORT, IN PART BECAUSE THE SUBSTANTIVE DIFFERENCES

BETWEEN THE TWO SIDES GOT AIRED IN THE KOHL MEETING, WHICH CAME FIRST. STRAUSS' CIRCLES APPEAR PLEASED WITH THIS PUBLICITY, AND HAVE FED THE PRESS REPORTS ABOUT A POSSIBLE STRAUSS VISIT TO THE USSR. END SUMMARY.

1. THE BREZHNEV-STRAUSS MEETING GOT MORE PUBLICITY LOCALLY THAN THE TALK WITH KOHL, IN PART BECAUSE STRAUSS' AIDES APPEARED TO BE MORE VIGOROUS IN BACK-GROUNDING THE PRESS, AND PARTLY BECAUSE BREZHNEV ACCOMPANIED STRAUSS TO HIS PARKED VEHICLE FOLLOWING THE MEETING, SOMETHING HE DID NOT DO FOLLOWING DISCUSSIONS WITH OTHER PARTY LEADERS IN THE FRG, INCLUDING KOHL. ACCORDING TO PRESS ACCOUNTS, BREZHNEV BEGAN THE MEETING BY READING FOR 15 MINUTES FROM A PREPARED TEXT. HE REPORTEDLY ASKED WHY STRAUSS AND THE CSU WERE "TOUGHER" WITH REGARD TO THE EASTERN TREATIES THAN THE CDU/CSU OPPOSITION OVERALL, AND HE ASKED RHETORICALLY WHY STRAUSS HAD REPEATEDLY STATED CONCERN OVER A POSSIBLE SOVIET ATTACK, ADDING "WE DO NOT WANT TO ATTACK YOU." IN ADDITION, HE CAUTIONED THAT THE OPPOSITION COULD NOT TURN THE DEFEAT OF WORLD WAR II INTO A "VICTORY," MEANING THE RE-UNIFICATION OF GERMANY.

2. STRAUSS, AGAIN ACCORDING TO PRESS ACCOUNTS, STRESSED THE SERIOUSNESS WITH WHICH THE CDU AND CSU VIEW TREATIES, CONFIDENTIAL

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AND SAID THAT THE UNION PARTIES AS A GOVERNMENT WOULD BE A SERIOUS PARTNER FOR MOSCOW. STRAUSS ALSO STATED HIS OPPOSITION TO MILITARY SOLUTIONS AND HIS ABHORRENCE OF WAR. HE SAID BOTH AFRICA AND THE MIDDLE EAST WERE DANGER POINTS WHICH COULD GET OUT OF CONTROL. ON RE-UNIFICATION, STRAUSS IS QUOTED AS HAVING TOLD BREZHNEV THAT "NO ONE CAN ASK US TO BELIEVE IN TWO GERMAN NATIONS." THE PRESS ALSO REPORTED THAT BREZHNEV AND STRAUSS HAD IN EFFECT AGREED DURING THEIR MEETING TO AVOID CONTROVERSIAL MATTERS LIKE BERLIN AND INSTEAD TO FOCUS ON MORE "BASIC" QUESTIONS.

3. KOHL'S MEETING, ACCORDING TO PRESS ACCOUNTS, INCLUDED MORE FOCUS ON DIFFERENCES OF VIEWS. KOHL REPORTEDLY PRESSED FOR THE SOLUTION OF HUMANITARIAN ISSUES, AND GAVE A BREZHNEV A LIST OF GERMAN-ORIGIN PERSONS (PRESUMABLY IN THE USSR) WHO HAD ASKED FOR VISAS TO TRAVEL ABROAD. KOHL ALSO TOUCHED ON THE IMPORTANCE OF ARMS-CONTROL EFFORTS AND EMPHASIZED THE IMPORTANCE OF GREATER FRG-SOVIET YOUTH EXCHANGES. FOLLOWING HIS MEETING WITH BREZHNEV, KOHL WAS QUOTED BY THE PRESS AS SAYING THAT BERLIN REMAINED THE LITMUS

TEST FOR DETENTE, AND THAT THE SOVIET POLICY OF
"PINPRICKS" AND ANNOYANCES AGAINST BERLIN SHOULD CEASE.
HE ALSO TOLD A REPORTER THAT HE SAW NO GROUNDS TO BE
OPTIMISTIC IN GENERAL ON THE MATTER OF BERLIN.

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4. ACCORDING TO A SOURCE CLOSE TO KOHL, BREZHNEV,
AGAIN READING FROM A PREPARED TEXT, BEGAN THE MEETING
WITH KOHL BY ACCUSING THE CDU AND CSU OF OPPOSING
DETENTE AND OF BEING ANTI-SOVIET. HE ALSO WARNED THE
FRG OPPOSITION ABOUT "BASING ITS POLICY ON THE WALL
OF CHINA," A REFERENCE TO OPPOSITION CONTACTS WITH
THE PRC. OUR SOURCE CONFIRMED PRESS ACCOUNTS THAT
KOHL THEN RAISED SEVERAL HARD ISSUES WITH BREZHNEV,

NOTING HOWEVER THAT KOHL DID NOT CITE BERLIN IN HIS
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SUBSEQUENT READ-OUT TO CDU INSIDERS AS A TOPIC HE HAD
RAISED WITH BREZHNEV. OUR SOURCE SPECULATED THAT KOHL'S
PESSIMISTIC REMARKS ON BERLIN QUOTED IN THE PRESS WERE
PROBABLY GENERAL IN NATURE AND NOT PEGGED TO SPECIFIC
DISCUSSION WITH BREZHNEV. OUR SOURCE ALSO TOOK PAINS
TO ASSURE US THAT THE FACT THAT BREZHNEV HAD ACCOMPANIED
STRAUSS RATHER THAN KOHL TO HIS LIMOUSINE WAS NOT
SIGNIFICANT, BECAUSE BREZHNEV COULD NOT HAVE ACCOMPANIED
KOHL SINCE STRAUSS WAS ALREADY WAITING IN THE
ANTECHAMBERS AT THAT TIME.

5. IN A SUBSEQUENT CONVERSATION WE HAD WITH A SOVIET
EMBASSY OFFICER, WE WERE TOLD THAT, IN GENERAL, THE
BREZHNEV VISIT WAS A CHANCE TO AFFIRM THAT THE FRG
REMAINS ON THE COURSE IT STARTED ON IN 1970 (I.E.,
RAPPROACHEMENT WITH THE EAST), AND THAT ALL MAJOR
ELEMENTS OF THE FRG, INCLUDING THE OPPOSITION, ARE
ASSOCIATED WITH THIS COURSE. IN SHORT, FROM THE
SOVIET STANDPOINT, THE FRG IS IN MORE OR LESS GOOD
SHAPE AND THE USSR SEEKS NO "BASIC CHANGES."

6. ON THE MATTER OF BREZHNEV'S TALKS WITH THE
OPPOSITION, WE ASKED THE SOVIET DIPLOMAT TO COMMENT
ON PRESS ACCOUNTS THAT THE STRAUSS VISIT SEEMED TO
HAVE GONE MORE SMOOTHLY THAN THE ONE WITH KOHL. THE
SOVIET SAID THIS WAS THE CASE, AND THAT STRAUSS STAYED
OFF THE "HARD" SUBJECTS SINCE THESE HAD ALREADY BEEN
ADDRESSED BY KOHL. FURTHER, THE SOVIET SAID, STRAUSS
WAS AN EXPERIENCED AND SPIRITED INTERLOCUTOR WHO KNEW
HOW TO MAKE CONVERSATION AND WHO WAS NEVER DULL. HE
ADDED THAT IT HAD BEEN IMPORTANT FOR BREZHNEV TO MEET
WITH STRAUSS, SINCE STRAUSS HAD NOT TALKED TO ANYONE
IN THE SOVIET LEADERSHIP SINCE 1958.

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7. STATE MINISTER WISCHNEWSKI TOLD THE AMBASSADOR
THAT, IN BRIEFING BREZHNEV'S AIDES, SOVIET EMBASSY
OFFICIALS HAD ADVISED THAT STRAUSS, RATHER THAN KOHL,
WAS THE KEY FIGURE IN THE OPPOSITION. CONSEQUENTLY,
BREZHNEV DEVOTED GREATER EFFORT TO HIS SESSION WITH
THE CSU LEADER. WHILE WISCHNEWSKI'S INFORMATION MAY
BE ACCURATE, IT IS WORTH NOTING THAT IT ALSO FITS WELL

INTO THE SPD'S PUBLIC PORTRAYAL OF THE KOHL-STRAUSS RELATIONSHIP.

8. COMMENT. WE ARE INCLINED NOT TO READ TOO MUCH INTO THESE VARIOUS COMMENTS ABOUT KOHL AND STRAUSS' PUTATIVE RELATIVE STANDING WITH BREZHNEV. ON THE OTHER HAND, THE OPPOSITION NOW APPEARS TO BE IN A PERIOD OF RELATIVELY RESTRAINED AND COURTEOUS RELATIONS WITH MOSCOW, AND WE CAN EXPECT OPPOSITION RHETORIC ON THE USSR TO BE MORE MUTED THAN USUAL IN THE COMING WEEKS, ALTHOUGH BASICALLY SOBER. THIS WAS INDEED THE CASE IN THE MAY 11 BUNDESTAG DEBATE (SEE REFTTEL AND FBIS). COMMENTING ON STRAUSS' BUNDESTAG PRESENTATION, WISCHNEWSKI TERMED IT FAR MORE STATESMANLIKE THAN KOHL'S SPEECH. (HE NOTED JOCULARLY THAT IF STRAUSS CONTINUED IN THIS VEIN THE SPD MIGHT WELL TAKE HIM INTO THE PARTY).

9. WE WOULD ALSO NOT BE SURPRISED TO SEE A STRAUSS TRIP TO MOSCOW IN THE MAKING, AND IN THIS REGARD NOTE COMMENTS FROM FRG SOURCES THAT SOVIET MEDIA COVERAGE ON BREZHNEV'S CONTACTS WITH THE OPPOSITION GAVE STRAUSS A BIGGER AND BETTER PRESS THAN KOHL.
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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 jan 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: HEAD OF GOVERNMENT VISITS, DIPLOMATIC DISCUSSIONS, POLITICAL LEADERS, OPPOSITION PARTIES
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 12 may 1978
Decaption Date: 01 jan 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 20 Mar 2014
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1978BONN08904
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D780203-0042
Format: TEL
From: BONN
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1978/newtext/t19780566/aaaacdwwu.tel
Line Count: 247
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: c0e616a0-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION EUR
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 5
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 78 BONN 8752
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 23 aug 2005
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 2712203
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: BREZHNEV VISIT: DISCUSSIONS WITH THE OPPOSITION
TAGS: PEPR, PINT, UR, GE, (BREZHNEV, LENOID IL'ICH)
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odbc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/c0e616a0-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Sheryl P. Walter
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
20 Mar 2014
Markings: Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014